



NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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NATO AND CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen W. Keith".

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ABSTRACT

NATO AND CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has revised its strategy and structure to carry out its basic security mission. The strategy recognizes the requirement to conduct contingency operations outside NATO territory, and structural changes have begun to develop that capability. This evolving capability has already been put to use in planning and conducting operations in the former Yugoslavia.

As the threats to Alliance countries have changed, so has the nature of NATO's primary military role of defense of NATO territory. Defense now requires contingency deployment of forces, as do operations out of area. Thus, development of a contingency capability does not reduce defense capability; rather, it enhances NATO's ability to defend its territory.

NATO should continue the changes it has begun, emphasizing deployability over fighting in place. Its forces for defense as well as out-of-area contingencies need to be flexible, mobile, supportable, and ready.

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PREFACE

I was assigned as chief of communications operations and plans at NATO's Headquarters Allied Forces South (AFSOUTH) from 1992 to 1994. During that period I was directly involved with current operations, including Operations SHARP GUARD, DENY FLIGHT, and their predecessors, as well as contingency plans for NATO ground operations in the former Yugoslavia in support of the United Nations. The observations in the text on current and planned operations, exercises, and the interaction of the various NATO contingency planning agencies come from my experience on the AFSOUTH staff.

NATO AND CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION: A New Job for NATO

"The North Atlantic Treaty of April 1949 brought into being an Alliance of independent countries with a common interest in maintaining peace and defending their freedom through political solidarity and adequate military defence."¹

For 40 years, the NATO founded in 1949 successfully defended the West against the East, but the world's premiere military alliance found itself in 1989 on the threshold of a new era. The Alliance redefined itself with a new strategy to fulfill its mission of security for its members. Recognizing the broader implications of "security," especially in post-Cold War Europe, NATO began to look beyond its borders at "out-of-area" (OOA) operations as part of its security mission.²

I shall refer to these OOA operations, which could range from humanitarian assistance or peace operations under United Nations aegis to crisis response involving combat, as "contingency operations." My analysis of NATO's evolving capability to conduct contingency operations will look at the development and current state of that capability, an assessment of how well it meets NATO's needs, and a view to the future.

¹North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "What is NATO?" NATO Handbook 1992 (Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1992).

²North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, North Atlantic Council, The Alliance's New Strategic Concept (Brussels: International Secretariat, 1991).

NATO TO 1995: Responding to the New Environment

As a defensive alliance, NATO compiled an impressive string of accomplishments, including unparalleled peacetime political and military cooperation among member nations, preservation of the trans-Atlantic link forged in World War II, development of unified command and control structures and methods, building of infrastructure to support the defense of Western Europe, and decades of mutual experience and exchange among military personnel.

The transformation of Europe beginning in 1989 left the Alliance wondering if NATO still had a job. It soon became apparent, however, that one big security problem had been quickly replaced by many smaller security problems in and near Europe. Alliance leaders began to reshape NATO for the new environment.

Beginning in 1990, NATO evolved a new strategy as well as new structures to carry out its mission. The Alliance's New Strategic Concept, which might be called "defense-plus," prescribes a "broad approach to security," emphasizing both political and military means to achieve its objectives. The primary role for the military is defense of the Alliance in peace, crisis, and war, in an environment of "diverse and multi-directional risks." In peacetime, this includes the "maintenance of stability and balance in Europe" as well as "contribut[ion] to global stability and peace by providing forces for United Nations missions." These tasks range from confidence-

building measures to contingency operations.³

New structures supporting the Alliance's "broad approach" include the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and the Partnership for Peace (PFP) as vehicles for dialogue and cooperation with non-NATO countries in Europe and the former USSR.⁴ Internal NATO developments include revision and reduction of the military structure, creation of the Allied Command Europe (ACE) Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) and several multi-national formations, development of the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept, and commencement of NATO's first contingency operations in support of the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia.⁵

³The Alliance's New Strategic Concept.

⁴For NACC, see: Richard Vincent, "Roles Evolve as Priorities Shift," The Officer, August 1993.

For PFP, see: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Partnership for Peace," NATO Basic Fact Sheet No. 9 (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1994); and

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, North Atlantic Council, Political Committee, Sub-Committee on Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union, Partnership for Peace, Draft Interim Staff Report (Brussels: International Secretariat, 1994).

⁵For the new NATO command structure in Europe, see David Miller, "New look for European Command," International Defense Review, May 1994.

The ARRC and multi-national formations are discussed in: Peter Saracino, "ARRC at the Sharp End: NATO's Rapid-Reaction Emergency Service," International Defense Review, May 1994; and

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, North Atlantic Council, Defence and Security Committee, After the NATO Summit: New Structures and Modalities for Military Co-operation, Draft General Staff Report (Brussels: International Secretariat, 1994).

For an excellent discussion of CJTF, see Charles L. Barry, "NATO's Bold New Concept-- CJTF," Joint Force Quarterly, Summer 1994.

NATO IN 1995: Current Contingency Capabilities

Looking at contingency operations in particular, what can NATO do now, five years after its internal changes began? I shall briefly examine new capabilities, operations in progress, operations in planning, and deficiencies.

New capabilities. Although not fully fleshed out, the ARRC is operational as a corps with a mobile headquarters and up to four divisions. Ten divisions plus corps troops from 12 of the 16 NATO nations are available for assignment to the ARRC, including single-nation, framework-nation (where one nation supplies the division's headquarters and some of its components), and multi-national formations.⁶ ARRC exercises are increasing in scope and content⁷, and NATO plans for the former Yugoslavia utilize the ARRC as a major component of the operation.⁸

Extensive development has gone into the CJTF concept, which uses the task force concept familiar to the US military. The goal is a NATO ability to form and deploy a multi-national, multi-service CJTF quickly to support OOA peace operations. CJTF headquarters would be formed from pre-designated elements of the existing NATO command structure, and there would likely be

⁶Saracino, "ARRC at the Sharp End."

⁷Ibid.; also: Daniel Burroughs, "Training For Peace: NATO Rapid Reaction Forces Complete Exercises," Armed Forces Journal International, April 1994.

⁸Burroughs, "Training for Peace."

standing CJTF headquarters within existing regional headquarters. The CJTF would be task-organized from available forces of various sizes and capabilities.⁹

The CJTF may incorporate non-NATO as well as NATO forces, and could operate under the control of NATO, the Western European Union (WEU), or even a coalition of states. CJTFs are designed to be "separable, but not separate" parts of the NATO structure.¹⁰

While the CJTF concept is not yet formally in place, and it is specifically designed for peace operations, this structure could be adapted to any form of contingency. Indeed, many of its elements are present in NATO plans for ground operations in the former Yugoslavia, which would essentially be CJTF operations in all but name.

Operations in progress. Since 1992, NATO has supported the United Nations with operations in the Adriatic and in the skies over Bosnia-Herzegovina. These are NATO's first OOA operations, and have provided significant training and experience.

⁹Barry, "NATO's Bold New Concept--CJTF."

¹⁰Ibid.; also: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) and New Missions for NATO, Report for Congress (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994); and

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, North Atlantic Council, Declaration of the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council Held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, on 10-11 January 1994 (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1994).

At sea, Operation SHARP GUARD is a combined NATO-WEU effort to maintain the United Nations embargoes on the former Yugoslavia.¹¹ Operation DENY FLIGHT maintains the "no-fly" zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina and provides air support to UN ground forces and "safe areas."¹²

Both of these operations utilize the existing NATO command structure in the Southern Region, and while they are now firmly established, both faced significant command and control (C2) deficiencies at the outset. Inadequate NATO C2 systems were initially augmented by national contributions and are now slowly being improved. Since both operations are staged from NATO territory, initial logistics problems were less serious, although new procedures and structures were needed to handle them.

Operations in planning. Among other possible contingencies, NATO has put considerable effort into planning several potential ground operations in the former Yugoslavia, ranging from implementation of a peace agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina to supporting a UN withdrawal. With some plans requiring 50,000 or more NATO troops, these would be large-scale OOA contingency operations of the type foreseen in the New Strategic Concept.

¹¹The primary NATO forces involved are the Standing Maritime Forces Mediterranean and Atlantic (SNFM and SNFL), controlled by Commander Naval Forces Southern Europe (COMNAVOUTH) in Naples.

¹²NATO and member nation air components, operating mainly from Italian air bases, are controlled by Commander Air Forces Southern Europe (COMAIRSOUTH, in Naples) through the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) at Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force (5ATAF) headquarters in Vicenza.

Deficiencies. NATO's nascent ability to conduct OOA contingency operations is still handicapped by deficiencies in practical capabilities, internal organization, and political support.

Practical capabilities. NATO's experience with planning and conducting OOA contingency operations has highlighted deficiencies which were not present in the days of planning for war on the Central Front, particularly with respect to combat support and combat service support capabilities. Lift, communications connectivity, and logistic support were taken care of when NATO planned to fight with forces in place on NATO territory, in the Central Region with its extensive infrastructure. Operations in areas without that static infrastructure, and with no host-nation support, pose a challenge to NATO to get forces in and support them.¹³

Internal organization. While the ARRC and the CJTF concept are welcome innovations, the relationship between the two has not been clarified. As part of the Rapid Reaction Forces, the ARRC may be thought of as primarily a defensive, war-fighting outfit, and CJTF is planned for only peace operations, but NATO planning for the former Yugoslavia envisions what is basically a large

¹³Among NATO nations, only the United States, the United Kingdom, and France have significant lift, communications, and logistics capabilities, and only the United States can support anything larger than a small-scale deployment.

A lack of civil affairs specialists is another combat service support deficiency which affects contingency operations, especially peace operations. Only the United States maintains a military civil affairs capability, and that mostly in the reserve.

CJTF with the ARRC as a component. The ARRC can clearly be used for operations other than war, and the CJTF concept is applicable to more contingencies than peace operations.

The relationship between ARRC, CJTF, and NATO's Immediate Reaction Forces is also vague.¹⁴ The standing formations generally plan and operate independently of one another. Meanwhile, contingency planning is also carried on at the relatively small Allied Reaction Forces Planning Staff (ARFPS), as well as at the theater and regional NATO headquarters. (For example, Commander Allied Forces Southern Europe [CINCSOUTH] has the lead on all planning related to the former Yugoslavia.)

While there has been some effort to coordinate planning in recent years, especially by ARFPS, NATO's ability to respond to contingencies suffers from division of effort and planning. As a practical example, AMF(L) and the ARRC do not share common communications systems, complicating the ARRC's ability to fall in on AMF(L), which would likely be the first NATO force on the scene.

Political support. My discussion has focused on NATO only, but NATO is only one of several organizations concerning themselves with security in Europe.

¹⁴The Immediate Reaction Forces are standing NATO formations designed to respond first to crises, and include the standing naval forces (SNFM and SNFL, mentioned in note 11) and the ACE Mobile Forces (Land) and (Air) (AMF[L] and AMF[A]). The Rapid Reaction Forces, which include the ARRC, form the next level of response to crisis. The Main Defense Forces consist of the bulk of NATO active and reserve forces and are designated for wartime defense of NATO territory.

The WEU, mentioned earlier in conjunction with the CJTF concept, has gained new life as the European Union's (EU) designated military agent, the expression of the emerging European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI). One reason for the "separable, but not separate" nature of a CJTF is to allow for a Europe-only option, where NATO capabilities are used by the European Allies in a WEU-led operation. There are also multi-national military formations outside the NATO structure, such as the Eurocorps, some of which are nominally associated with the WEU, whose relationship to NATO is not well defined.¹⁵

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), consists of over 50 members from North America to Siberia, including virtually every European state. As the original East-West forum and successor to the Helsinki movement, its champions see it as the natural guarantor of security in Europe, although it has no military capability.¹⁶

¹⁵North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO], North Atlantic Council [NAC], Declaration of North Atlantic Council Meeting of 10-11 January 1994; and [NATO], [NAC], Defence and Security Committee, After the NATO Summit: New Structures and Modalities for Military Co-operation, Draft General Staff Report (Brussels: International Secretariat, 1994); and [NATO], [NAC], Political Committee, A European Security Policy, Staff Report (Brussels: International Secretariat, 1994).

¹⁶North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO], "Interlocking Institutions: The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe," NATO Basic Fact Sheet No. 6 (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1994); and [NATO], North Atlantic Council, Political Committee, Working Group on the New European Security Order, The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe: A Case of Identity, Draft Interim Staff Report (Brussels: International Secretariat, 1994). (Note that the OSCE is the recent successor to the

NATO itself has spawned the NACC and the PFP, mentioned earlier, to foster political and military cooperation across the old East-West divide.

All of these Europe-based organizations, as well as the United Nations, claim some responsibility for European security affairs. Their memberships overlap, and different nations push different agendas in the different forums. The result is that there is no one "right answer" when it comes to questions of European security.

ASSESSMENT: Two Different Missions?

How well does this evolving OOA contingency capability meet NATO's needs? And how does it affect the Alliance's primary mission of defense?

The New Strategic Concept reaffirmed the defense of the NATO member countries as NATO's primary military role. A diminished threat allowed NATO to reduce and reorganize its forces. Gone are the old corps structure and "linear" defense of the Central Front. Now the Main Defense Forces¹⁷ consist of smaller, more flexible multi-national formations, capable of providing the necessary defense at much less cost than the pre-1989 force.

Simultaneously, the Alliance recognized it also had to be

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe [CSCE]).

¹⁷See note 11 for Main Defense Force concept.

able to mount contingency operations outside NATO territory. New structures and concepts were adopted, and the first OOA operations were begun in the former Yugoslavia. Despite the deficiencies outlined earlier, NATO has made a creditable start in the contingency business.

But has the Alliance bitten off more than it can chew? Why complicate the primary mission, itself in transition, with the addition of what amounts to a new, complicated, and uncertain secondary mission? How should resources be apportioned, especially in a time of shrinking defense budgets in all the NATO nations? Can or should the Alliance plan for OOA contingency operations which cannot be foreseen and for which there is no advance political support?

Leaving aside the political questions of whether NATO will or should conduct OOA contingency operations, the military planner is faced with the requirement of the New Strategic Concept to be able to carry them out. With two missions and fewer resources, he should ask himself where he can share resources between both missions. What is common between them?

At first, a search for commonality between territorial defense and OOA contingency operations would seem to be a comparison of apples and oranges. But a closer look reveals that the changes of recent years have made it more like comparing oranges and oranges.

The primary threat to NATO territory used to be poised at the Fulda Gap, but except for northern Norway, the Russian Army

is now hundreds of miles away from NATO's borders. The most exposed NATO members are in the south, particularly Turkey.¹⁸ These countries do not face threats of massive invasion and do not need massive armies guarding the gates, but they do require reinforcement from their Allies in time of danger (as when NATO deployed forces to southeastern Turkey during the Gulf War in Operation SOUTHERN GUARD, for example).

The front has shifted, but the bulk of NATO's Main Defense Forces are still in the Central Region. In order to meet the principal threats, they have to be mobile. A task-organized contingency deployment in defense of NATO territory, into an area without the infrastructure and host nation support of the Central Region, begins to look a lot like an OOA contingency, differing only in size and composition of the force.

Instead of two distinct missions, there are really two very similar requirements. Main defense has effectively become a contingency operation "in area," and contingency operations in area and out of area are but variations of the same theme.

¹⁸Domenico Corcione, "New Risks and Roles in NATO's Southern Region," NATO's Sixteen Nations, January 1993; James B. Davis, "NATO-Europe--Extending into the South?" NATO's Sixteen Nations, April 1992; and Richard N. Perle, "An American View: NATO's Future, Threats," The Officer, January 1993.

THE FUTURE: Matching Force and Policy

What is needed. To carry out its defense mission, both in and out of area, the Alliance needs forces which are flexible, mobile, supportable, and ready. To be effective, the right force must arrive at the right place and the right time to meet the contingency. Clearly, many of NATO's forces are already capable of contingency operations, and the work of the past few years has largely prepared NATO to employ them in that role. More work is necessary to optimize the force structure, however.

Also required for NATO's military arm to function effectively is clear political direction. Strong civil-military-political cohesion is necessary to employ any military force, all the more so in meeting the ambiguous security threats of the post-Cold War period. There must be unity of purpose among the Allies, and a settlement among the various security organizations operating in Europe as to which security entity to use where.

Force optimization. NATO has already embarked on the path to build the force structure necessary for contingency operations. The key, however, is to continue the changes which have been begun and not to stop at a point which is between the old and the new and not suitable for either. The goal is to produce a continuum of defense and OOA contingency options, from small in-place forces to larger deployable formations.

Flexibility. There are three areas of emphasis in improving

the flexibility of NATO's military force: command structure, contingency planning and direction, and force assignment.

The command structure has undergone significant reduction and consolidation in recent years. To effectively conduct contingency operations, it must change further, placing more emphasis on deployability and less on fighting in place. For example, ACE could reduce from three to two regional Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs): one in the north with its primary focus toward the east, and the other in the south, looking south and southeast.¹⁹ There could be fewer Principal Subordinate Commands (PSCs) below the MSCs as well, either component- or task-oriented. For example, the Southern Region could reduce from two (soon to be three) land commanders and two naval commanders to one land and one naval, each responsible for the entire region. The savings in MSC/PSC staff positions could be used for standing CJTFs or other deployable functions. Another possibility would be to move these resources into a third, non-regional training and readiness MSC for ACE contingency forces, under which could be consolidated ARFPS, the ARRC, and the AMFs.

Contingency planning and direction is currently fragmented among many elements of the command structure. As mentioned earlier, ARFPS has begun to coordinate elements of contingency planning within ACE, but more needs to be done to bring coherence to this area.

¹⁹See Miller, "New Look for European Command," for the current ACE structure.

For contingency operations to be a viable option, forces must be assigned for contingency planning and training. The vehicle for this planning and training could be CJTF exercises. Assignments may be permanent, such as to the AMF(L), or rotational, such as to the standing naval forces, or to a "menu," as for the ARRC. Assignments must include augmented combat support and combat service support to enable deployment of contingency combat forces.

Mobility and supportability. Lift, communications, and logistics are NATO's greatest weaknesses in conducting contingency operations, particularly OOA operations.²⁰ These capabilities must be sourced, ready, and committed (or commitable) if NATO is to have a credible contingency deployment option. These resources could be NATO assets, such as some of the communications improvements currently in progress²¹, or national assets available for Alliance use. Optimally, national capabilities should be available from more than one nation to preserve NATO's flexibility.

Readiness. To be effective, contingency forces must be trained. The ARRC's experience in its first major deployment exercise is instructive of the problems in OOA contingency

²⁰Barry, "NATO's Bold New Concept--CJTF;" and Antonio Milani, "Future Support of Multinational NATO Forces," NATO's Sixteen Nations, February 1992.

²¹David Miller, "NATO Command and Information Systems: Peacekeeping Poses New Challenges," International Defense Review, June 1994.

operations.²² Major and minor NATO exercises, which have begun to shift their focus away from countering a Soviet-style threat, must continue to emphasize the operations the Alliance is more likely to face.

Policy choices. Once a simple matter of East versus West, the European security situation is a welter of organizations with divergent goals, interests, and capabilities. Effective military security requires political unity of purpose. The Alliance's political leadership must decide what NATO is or is not about, and must define its relationship with the EU/WEU, the OSCE, and the United Nations, not to mention its own partners in the NACC and PFP. If NATO is the chosen security instrument, resources must be committed to it. These are complex and difficult political tasks, but they are critical if the Alliance is to fulfill its mission.

CONCLUSION: NATO, Europe, and the World

In a region where "Europe and peace have not been words that naturally run together,"²³ NATO has long been "the single,

²²Burroughs, "Training for Peace;" and Saracino, "ARRC at the Sharp End."

²³Douglas T. Stuart, "The Future of the European Alliance: Problems and Opportunities for Coalition Strategies" in Collective Security in Europe and Asia, ed. Gary L. Guertner, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College. Strategic

most effective element for stability and security in Europe."²⁴ The Alliance is now reshaping its military tool to meet the challenges of the new European security situation, including developing a credible capability to respond to contingencies in peace, crisis, and war outside of NATO territory. Rather than diluting its primary military role of defense, this contingency capability adds to the Alliance's defense in a Europe where the main threat is no longer massed armies on the Central Front. Defense of NATO territory from threats beyond its borders requires the same ability to deploy flexible, mobile, supportable, and ready forces as do contingency operations out of area.

NATO's challenge is to continue to shape its military tool to meet a range of contingencies from small to large, near to far. The Allies' political leadership will determine NATO's place in European, and world, security affairs. Whether the Alliance is ever called upon to conduct major OOA contingency operations in Europe or elsewhere, however, its ability to do so will also ensure it can carry out its primary task of defending its member nations.

Studies Institute, 1992), p. 59.

²⁴A. C. Gerry, "With Cold War Over and the USSR No More, NATO Is in a Difficult Transition Phase," The Officer, January 1993, p. 28.

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